

THE EFFECT OF THE EDITORIAL POLICY ON POLITICAL ACTION

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A THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

Many studies have been made with comments on either the importance or the lack of importance of the newspaper's function in the pattern of society. With few exceptions these studies have been carried out by observers with a point of view either unscientifically critical or credulous. These investigators often have accepted these studies with little effort to tie up loose ends in comprehensive and usable works that would include the social, political, and economic significance of the press.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the political content of editorials in two selected newspapers and to correlate the attitudes expressed in these newspapers with the voting behavior of Georgia citizens during the 1950 gubernatorial campaign.

Assumptions

The study proceeded on the assumption that the material analyzed in the newspapers affected the readers in ways that could be specified, i.e., stimulated voting in a particu-

lar way. The next assumption was that the newspaper contains material submitted by individuals who are engaged in estimating, reporting, and influencing opinions and attitudes.

Methodology and Definitions

The Atlanta Constitution and the Atlanta Journal were analyzed for political comment concerning the Georgia gubernatorial election of June 28, 1950. The contents of these newspapers were analyzed for thirty days prior to the election, the period covering May 28 through June 27, 1950.

The technique employed in this study was content analysis. "Content analysis attempts to characterize the meanings in a given body of discourse in a systematic and quantitative fashion."¹ According to Waples and Berelson content analysis "seeks to describe publications with primary attention given to their influence upon typical readers."²

The first step in the procedure was to analyze the contents of the editorial pages of the Atlanta Constitution and the Atlanta Journal in order to determine the points of view expressed in the editorials, by the columnists, the public and other newspapers published in Georgia.

The editorials expressed the opinion of the particular publication by commenting on the various policies and actions of the major candidates. The articles by the columnists which

¹Abraham Kaplan, "Content Analysis and the Theory of Signs," Philosophy of Science, X (1943), p. 230.

²Douglas Waples, Bernard Berelson and Franklyn Bradshaw, What Reading Does to People, University of Chicago Press, 1940, p. 146.

were used in the study were signed articles appearing on the editorial pages with the exception of syndicated columns. The columnists whose material appeared in the Constitution were Jack Tarver, Ralph McGill, Leo Aikman, Calvin Cox and M. L. St. John. The Journal's columnists included Morgan Blake, Wright Bryan and Ernest Rogers.

The columns "Pulse of the Public" in the Constitution and "Letters to the Editor" in the Journal represented the attitudes of those readers who expressed themselves through mail. From these two daily columns one could ascertain the attitudes of the readers on many current issues. During the thirty-day period covered, many letters, pro and con, were written about both major candidates and their campaign procedures.

The last group of editorial articles analyzed were those printed in the "Pulse of the Press" which appears in the Atlanta Constitution and "Cider from the Georgia Press," a feature of the Atlanta Journal. These two departments represent the points of view of a number of selected newspapers throughout the State of Georgia. Excerpts from editorials appearing in these publications provided an opportunity to observe and analyze the attitudes expressed in some of the newspapers published in other sections of Georgia.

The Analysis Procedure

The whole article was used as the unit of analysis, i.e., the main idea expressed in each editorial was stated in a sentence which then became the theme of that particular

article. According to one definition "a theme is a sentence (or sentence-compound) usually a summary or abstracted sentence, under which a wide range of specific formulations can be subsumed."¹

Each theme was listed under one of five categories. The first category, Character and Reputation of Candidates, included statements relative to the moral behavior, the religious attitudes and other personal traits of the candidates. Subsumed under Social and Political Attitudes of the Candidates, the second category, were the attitudes toward (1) veterans and other classes and groups, (2) the schools, (3) the preservation of the status quo, (4) progressive legislation and (5) the county unit system. A third category, Public Reaction to Candidates, included statements which discussed the past records and administrative achievements of candidates.

The themes were coded by the use of a plus sign if the articles were favorable to the theme as stated; and by a minus sign if the statements were unfavorable to the theme as stated.

Conclusions were drawn regarding the effects of the editorial point of view on the readers by comparing the way in which the citizens voted with the attitudes expressed in the newspapers. The number of votes cast for his opponent was compared with the number of articles favoring and the number of articles opposing the candidate and these were recorded on a frequency table.

¹Bernard Berelson and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, The Analysis of Communication Content (Preliminary Draft, March, 1946), p. 80. (Mimeographed).

CHAPTER II

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TWO NEWSPAPERS

The Atlanta Constitution was established as a morning daily in 1868 by Colonel Carey W. Syles. Immediately after its founding the paper led the fight for the re-establishment of state government under the rule of the people of Georgia during a period when Georgia was still under Federal military control. The native white Georgians regained control of the state government in 1871 when Yankee "scalwags" and "carpet-baggers" were driven out of the area. Because of the stand which it had taken on this issue, the Constitution increased in popularity and became one of the foremost molders of public opinion in the region.

Colonel Syles, the founder, remained with the Constitution for only one year when he was succeeded by G. H. Anderson. The latter entered into a partnership with his son-in-law, William A. Hemphill, an Atlanta school teacher who had participated in the Civil War as a Confederate soldier. Anderson retired in 1871 and was succeeded by Colonel E. Y. Clarke. Hemphill and Clarke remained the chief owners of the Constitution until 1871, when Clarke sold his share to Captain Evan P. Howell. A few years later Henry W. Grady, a young man who later became the South's most outstanding orator, bought

one-fourth interest in the paper and was made managing editor. It was under his leadership that the paper received added prestige and recognition on a national as well as on a state and local level.

Some idea of the general format and content of the Constitution during this period may be understood by reviewing an 1882 issue of the publication. There were eight pages in the issue with six columns to the page. The first column contained advertisements, while the second one contained two ghost stories plus a feature article on superstition. The third and fourth columns were allocated to speeches by Ben Hill and former Governor Colquitt, respectively. The fifth column was a travelogue in the Burton Holmes manner entitled "Life and Nature in the Far Northwest." The most striking notice on the first page was the last column headed "Women's Feet," in which the reader learned that "Mme. Patti has the plumpest of legs that hang over her trim little boots," while "The spindle limbs of Bernhardt borrow rotundity from bull red, black blue and dull pink stockings." The inner pages contained news items with such captions as "Cruelty Deceived--A Young Woman Made Crazy by the Neglect of a Faithless Lover" and the "The Evils of Drink--Drunken Young Man Arrested for Loitering Confesses He Has Led Many Young Girls Along the Road to Ruin." The "Personal Intelligence" column contained such confidences as "The season in the deer forests of Scotland is now pretty well over" and "The elevated railroads in New York are being repainted."¹

¹Writers of the Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in Georgia, Atlanta A City of the Modern South (American Guide Series; New York, 1942), p. 99.

"The reporter of the day pictured himself not as Mercury but as Aesop. In any news story concerning unfortunate persons every possible opportunity was taken to squeeze out the utmost of sentiment and to point out the telling moral."¹ Headlines were standarized, and "The Wages of Sin" led the lot. Differentiation between actual fact and fiction was hardly discernible.

Not only did the Constitution excel in the conventional reportorial standards of the day, but it also entered candidly and dynamically into critical controversial issues. The editorial offices served as a training school for numerous figures who later became well-known in the fields of journalism and literature. Included among these were Joel Chandler Harris, whose "Uncle Remus" stories appeared first in the Constitution; Major Charles Smith, the homespun philosopher, whose works were published under the pseudonym of "Bill Arp"; and the poet, Frank Stanton, whose poems expressed "the soil and soul of America" in a column known for years as "Just From Georgia."² Two other reporters on the staff, Wallace P. Reed and L. L. Knight, later became noted historians of Atlanta and Georgia.

The Constitution continued to succeed in the field of journalism as well as in other business enterprises. Radio Station WGST began operation on March 15, 1922, one hour later

¹Ibid.

²Writers of the Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in Georgia, Atlanta A City of the Modern South, p. 99.

than Radio Station WSB. In 1921 Clark Howell, present owner and publisher of the publication, gave the station to the Georgia School of Technology so that the students might have an opportunity to study radio engineering.

At the time of this study the Constitution received news from the following wire services: the Associated Press, the United Press, the International News Service and the North American Newspaper Alliance. Syndicated writers included Westbrook Pegler, Joseph and Stewart Alsop, Fred Othman, Bob Considine and many others at infrequent intervals.

For many years the Constitution was the undisputed leader among the city's daily newspapers, but in 1883 the Atlanta Journal appeared, as an afternoon publication, to challenge the former paper's dominance.

In its first issue the Journal proclaimed, "Our editorial department will be under the exclusive control of those who are 'to the manor born', and, therefore, our patrons need not fear that any offence will be given through ignorance of Southern sentiment or lack of sympathy with it. In politics the Journal will be democratic, though not so loosely-buckled in the harness that it will unthinkingly yield to the party lash in the hand of those who may assume the right to rule."¹

The four-page issue was founded by Colonel E. P. Hoge, a leading lawyer and legislator who had been a soldier in the Confederate Army. The treatment of the news by the Journal in those early years was lively and realistic. Each article possessed a personal touch, and every issue was crammed with local news. Such captions as these appeared:

¹Edwin Camp, "The Story of the Atlanta Journal," p. 3.

Trains all on time today.... Israel Putnam, the insurance agent, went to Griffin on the first train this morning.... The Air Line sleeper left for New York with every section taken by Eastern passengers.... Bill Davis, the bartender, who was so badly bruised by Jim Kelly in Lynch's saloon on Peters St., is slowly recovering.... The retail grocers have entered into an alliance against deadbeats. They proposed to publish a list of their irreclaimable delinquents in a few days.¹

No incident, no matter how trivial, went unpublished if it contained local interest.

The Journal's future was assured by a chance occurrence which made it the talk of the town and the state. This was the issuance of an extra edition covering the burning of the Kimball House. On Sunday morning, August 12, 1883, the Kimball House, one of the finest and best known hotels in the South, was destroyed by fire. The fire broke out at 4:30 in the morning when the regular morning issue of the Constitution was already off the press; so the Journal staff hastily composed an extra, which was rushed onto the streets. Other copies were sped to trains for distribution to cities throughout the state. Long before the paper went to press the sidewalk in front of the office was crowded with people eager to secure an early copy. The Journal stated editorially on Tuesday, August 14, 1883: "It is difficult to tell which created the greater excitement in neighboring towns and cities--The Kimball House fire or the Journal's Sunday extra."²

The newspaper changed hands in 1887 when Hoke Smith, a young and successful lawyer, purchased it from John Paul

¹Ibid.

²Camp, op. cit., p. 5.

Jones for \$10,000. The primary aim of the new ownership "was to improve the news service and the material facilities of the paper...despite the fact that the country, and especially the South, had run into a business depression."¹ Its capital proved to be sufficient to meet the economic crisis and consequently the Journal was able to survive and to increase in popularity with better news coverage. Its circulation figures in 1889 increased from 9,000 to 12,000.

In 1888 the Journal took an active part in state and national politics when, under the influence of Hoke Smith, it endorsed Grover Cleveland for president of the United States. When Cleveland won both the nomination and the election, in recognition of Hoke Smith's services, the president appointed him to the cabinet as Secretary of the Interior thereby giving the Journal national prestige.

An important factor in the growth of the circulation of the paper was the pioneering of its management in establishing, in 1887, a daily women's page--seven columns devoted solely to the domestic, social, and cultural activities of the women of Atlanta and the South.

The Journal continued to expand its services and,

In 1894 it obtained the full day report of the Associated Press, which had been struggling for years against an older and better established competitor. The leading spirits of the Journal had played no small part in the building up of the Southern Associated Press, which, in time, proved a bulwark to the senior organization, now nationally and internationally dominant in news gathering. Previously the Journal had been receiving only a skeletonized or "pony" service but on Dec. 8, 1894, a ninety-

¹Ibid.

year contract was signed and the paper obtained exclusive rights to the full report in Atlanta.¹

The gubernatorial campaign of 1906 was one of the largest ever participated in by the Journal. It led the most stirring political campaign known in Georgia when Hoke Smith ran for governor. Of the 145 counties then existing, 122 were carried by Smith. The prestige and popularity of the paper were state wide.

Radio Station WSB was established March 15, 1922, by the Atlanta Journal which thus became the first newspaper in the South and the second in the nation to foresee the possibilities of radio at a time when this medium was still in an experimental stage. At the present time, in addition to owning the radio station, the newspaper is also the owner of WSB-TV, a television station.

On March 19, 1950, the Atlanta Journal and The Atlanta Constitution announced an agreement had been reached for a merger.

It is true that we have reached an agreement toward merging The Constitution and The Journal. This agreement is subject to the approval of certain government agencies. It is assumed this approval will be forthcoming without undue delay.

The effect of this merger, should it be accomplished, will be the continuance of the publication of The Constitution in the morning field and The Journal in the evening field. We are looking to the consolidation of the Sunday Journal and Sunday Constitution, the combined publication to retain all the best features and writers now carried in each.

The editorial policies of The Journal and of The Constitution will remain independent as at present....

We are fully aware of the great responsibility which

¹Camp, op. cit., p. 6.

is thrust upon our shoulders in the merger of these two great newspapers. Economic reasons have played a larger part in dictating this move on our part.

Both newspapers will continue to publish and transact all business in their plants as heretofore....¹

The initial announcement of the merger between the two publications created some public concern relative to how the merger would affect each paper. There were many details which had to be worked out by the staffs. For instance, one detail that received much consideration was the distribution of the Sunday edition since both papers had different carriers and circulation staffs. The new business firm sought and secured the aid of the public in solving the problem. In due time, all details had been worked out and the merger began operation.

The Sunday edition, which is called the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, is at the present time the only obvious evidence of the merger. Both the Journal and Constitution have remained independent units with the morning and the afternoon papers published as before, editorially free and autonomous, with no central editorial control. The editorial and business staffs remain in separate quarters, along with their mechanical departments. The Sunday issue presents an editorial section of twelve pages of opinions and comments on international, national and local affairs.

¹Atlanta Constitution, March 19, 1950, p. 1.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER CONTENT

Interpretation of Themes

In this study themes were used to summarize the attitudes expressed in articles appearing in the Atlanta Constitution and the Atlanta Journal. The themes were grouped under five categories.

Outline Showing the Categories with the Themes Grouped under Each

A. Character and Reputation of Candidates

A1 Thompson is a courageous, honest statesman and if elected will install an effective and economic administration.

A2 Talmadge and his followers are dishonest.

A3 Talmadge and his followers are law-violators.

B. Social and Political Attitudes of Candidates

B1 Conditions among veterans will be better under Talmadge.

B2 Talmadge is not in sympathy with the working people and does not have their support.

B3 Talmadge does favor a modern integrated system of public welfare for the state.

B4 Talmadge does not deserve credit for non-FEPC

legislation.

- B5 The County Unit System is not democratic and holds back the progress of the State.
- B6 Talmadge, if elected, will preserve Southern ideals and traditions.
- B7 Talmadge evades the question of how to finance better schools in Georgia.
- B8 Talmadge's campaign promises are so numerous that voters should be skeptical of what he says.
- B9 Thompson is not in sympathy with beneficial programs for veterans.
- B10 School conditions under Thompson will improve.

C. Public Reaction to Candidates

- C1 The Georgia Press is against Talmadge and his policies.
- C2 Thompson's platform is winning new supporters.

D. Appeals for Support

- D1 Vote for Talmadge.
- D2 Vote for Thompson.

E. Past Record of Candidates

- E1 Talmadge's record and success show him to be the sort of person whom most Georgians would like to see become governor.

In the following sections specific examples selected from the editorial pages illustrate further the grouping of themes under each of the five categories.

Category A. Character and Reputation
of Candidates

Thompson is a courageous, honest statesman and if elected will install an effective and economic administration was the theme that covered articles that dealt with the character of Thompson and the potential effect of his character on his administration, if he should be elected. Examples of the comments sent in by writers supporting the above theme as stated were:

...M. E. Thompson has made a careful study of governmental affairs and we believe that he will be prepared, if elected, to deal with the problems, honestly and intelligently.¹

Certainly, a candidate who dares sell his home to launch a campaign for honest government is not wanting in the spirit that makes a staunch, a confident, and an independent fighter.²

Thompson...is the only logical, Christian, sincere and true candidate in the race against the dictator, Herman.³

Thompson is not dodging the issues. He is telling the people where he stands....⁴

Two very closely related themes were used to group the articles commenting on the character and reputation of Talmadge and his followers. Talmadge and his followers are dishonest, and Talmadge and his followers are law-violators. Subsumed under the first theme were articles accusing the Talmadgites of dishonesty of character, action and policy.

¹Atlanta Constitution, May 31, 1950, p. 10.

²Atlanta Journal, June 3, 1950, p. 2.

³Atlanta Constitution, June 26, 1950, p. 14.

⁴Ibid., June 16, 1950, p. 22.

One writer recalls this incident to illustrate the dishonesty of Talmadgites:

Put not your trust in red suspenders. They may hold a man's pants up, but not necessarily his honor.... The other day a fellow went to "Taxi," told him he was out hustling for Herman and "would you kindly cash a check?"

On exhibit as identification was a pair of red galluses. Well, Mr. Smith could hardly refuse in face of such credentials....

But the bank said the check had much more bounce in it than the galluses.... The check passer went to jail, where he gave his address as Telfair County.¹

Another writer recalled the voting fraud in Telfair County in 1946 when the name of deceased voters were used in ballots.

The writer stated:

If I am still living I shall vote for the Hon. M. E. Thompson for governor in the coming Democratic primary, but if I am dead and have taken up my place of abode with the long gone, my vote will be placed in Hummons' column, for the inhabitants of the country graveyards, and population of the city cemeteries are all going to vote for Hummon-that is, if we judge the present and future by the past.²

The second theme pertaining to the character and reputation of Talmadge, grouped articles that accused Talmadge and his followers of being members of the Ku Klux Klan and advocates of race hatred. Reference to Talmadge's remark that he would ignore United States Supreme Court on segregation were also included here. An example of disagreement with the theme Talmadge and his followers are law violators appeared in the Constitution:

In a recent issue of your paper there appeared an article written by the editor of the Unadilla Observer accusing our Governor of being friendly with law violators

¹Ibid., May 30, 1950, p. 10.

²Atlanta Journal, June 15, 1950, p. 34.

whom she accuses of being Klansmen.... I wonder why almost all the Georgia press are against any one who bears the name of Talmadge. Is it because he stands for white supremacy?...¹

Category B. Social and Political
Attitudes of Candidates

The theme Conditions among veterans will be better under Talmadge covered articles expressing the attitudes of the veterans in response to Talmadge's platform. The articles analyzed in this group were all negative to the theme stated. Some examples of the comments are:

The veterans down in Burke County are wondering whether or not Herman believes the poppycock he is spreading about helping the veterans. Uncle Sam, not the State of Georgia, has been sending out the checks to GI's.²

Georgia veterans must not be particularly impressed with what candidate Herman Talmadge has to say about all he has done for them....

The mighty slim attendance Talmadge had when he addressed the American Legion convention here Friday indicates Legionnaire Herman isn't as popular as some wool-hatters would have you believe....

It ought to make him stop and realize that we Georgia veterans resent his claiming credits for whatever benefits we have received.

We earned the GI bill by our own service in the armed forces. Herman didn't even earn these benefits for us, but he is trying to campaign for political office on what we did for our country....³

The attitudes of the working people of Georgia toward Talmadge as a candidate for governor are represented by the following excerpts:

Herman, my boy, you have done a lot of talking recently but you ain't said nothing....

¹Atlanta Constitution, June 9, 1950, p. 24.

²Atlanta Journal, June 22, 1950, p. 28.

³Ibid., June 9, 1950, p. 23.

The working people of this State need and want protection from the "sales tax" but you steadfastly refuse to offer that protection....

Do you believe that the working people of Georgia are going to continue you in a life of ease and luxury in the Governor's Mansion while they sweat out the sales tax?¹

Governor Talmadge is always boasting about what he has done for the people of Georgia.

If he would look at the payroll of the men who work for the maintenance department who work for 50 cents per hour, five dollars per day for 10 hours work, no social security and no sick benefits, it seems that he would be glad to turn the office as Governor over to ex-Governor Thompson who did give them a raise....²

The theme covering comment of this type was Talmadge is not in sympathy with the working people and does not have their support.

Talmadge does not favor a modern integrated system of public welfare for the state was the theme that covered the articles which dealt with comments on welfare issues as they pertained to Talmadge. One writer stated:

I read in Saturday's Journal, June 17, where Mr. Talmadge claims 33,000 people have been added to pension roles and that his opponent, Mr. Thompson, was telling falsehoods about some people drawing only one dollar per month. I have a neighbor who only got one dollar per month. He lives in a trailer and rents the land it sits on and has no other property except the trailer....

This isn't all Mr. Talmadge did. He cut checks in Hall county, saying they would be raised back in September and he has never done this....³

Statements expressing resentment of Talmadge's remark that he killed the FEPC bill were grouped under the theme Talmadge does not deserve credit for non-FEPC legislation.

¹Atlanta Constitution, June 6, 1950, p. 18.

²Ibid., June 24, 1950, p. 2.

³Atlanta Journal, June 21, 1950, p. 18.

Examples of some of the articles are:

Gov. Talmadge has advertised many achievements which he claims to his administration. He also gives himself credit for the preservation of the county unit system and the cloture of the FEPC, both of which he had nothing to do with....¹

The FEPC is virtually a dead issue for the present session of Congress.

It was killed without Herman Talmadge's assistance and without his being re-elected governor of Georgia....²

The attitudes of the readers toward the "County Unit System" which Talmadge advocated and supported were grouped under the theme The County Unit System is not democratic and holds back the progress of the State. Writers agreeing with the theme as stated wrote:

The unjustness of the County Unit System has often been pointed out, but nothing can be done about it. City people are at the mercy of the rural voter, who is less well informed politically and votes on little but his prejudices....

This State cries out for progress. Would Mr. Talmadge hold it back for the sake of votes? I know darn well he would.³

Talmadge, if elected, will preserve Southern ideals and traditions. This theme represented a promise which Talmadge included in his campaign platform. Readers objecting to this clause wrote as follows:

So Governor Talmadge of the great State of Georgia vows to hold hatred and segregation taut against our colored fellow Americans down South.

It is not surprising that a State Chief, even democratically elected, can be something far below a moron. But it is a surprise to learn that a Governor of one of

¹Atlanta Constitution, June 27, 1950, p. 16.

²Atlanta Journal, June 1, 1950, p. 19.

³Atlanta Constitution, June 6, 1950, p. 18.

our United States has not even opened up a primer in America's history....¹

Talmadge evades the question of how to finance better schools in Georgia was the theme that covered articles which dealt with the question of better schools in Georgia. Some excerpts from articles placed under this theme follow:

Governor Talmadge promised to "finance (it) in full during the next school year," but said, "We will have to devise an equitable means of obtaining the necessary revenue"....

We have, therefore, a flat promise that the MFPE will be financed, but a vagueness as to how that can only be regarded as evasive.²

Articles accusing Talmadge of illegal and doubtful election promises were subsumed under the theme Talmadge's campaign promises are so numerous that voters should be skeptical of what he says:

However, last week I had occasion to be in Rome and I spent part of the time around the Federal building where the United States court was in session. There were jurors and witnesses from every county in northwest Georgia. When I related to some of them what the governor had promised to do for Chattooga I learned that he had made a similar promise to every county in the northwest corner of the state....

We decided to forget the whole matter as simply an election promise.³

With the state primary less than a week off, Gov. Herman Talmadge continues to evade the question of how to finance good schools and good roads in Georgia.

He utters grandiose promises, but fails to explain how he can make them good. Considering the promises Gov. Talmadge has broken in the past two years, voters may well be skeptical of what he says now....⁴

¹Ibid., June 12, 1950, p. 10.

²Atlanta Journal, June 5, 1950, p. 18.

³Ibid., June 22, 1950, p. 28.

⁴Atlanta Journal, June 23, 1950, p. 18.

Has Governor Talmadge any legal right to pledge \$1,000,000 to Bibb County for road building, if elected, as stated in your June 20 Constitution? If so, how much is being pledged to Fulton, Richmond, Chatham and other rich counties?...

If the Governor's race has come to a trading proposition, it seems the voters of Hall County cannot drive a good bargain at this stage of the campaign.¹

Themes which dealt with Thompson's attitudes on social and political issues were grouped under Thompson is not in sympathy with a beneficial program for the veterans. This theme covered articles of writers, all veterans who disapproved of Thompson for governor. Examples of comments on this theme were:

I would like to know how M. E. Thompson figures on getting to be Governor on the kind of tripe he's trying to make the Georgia veterans swallow.

In one town he tells of what Talmadge has failed to do for the veteran and in another he derides him for the things he does for them while at the same time he uses the good roads Herman built to peddle his tripe....He's making too many blunders at present.²

Two years ago it was almost impossible in the State of Georgia to get any kind of vocational training provided for vets, as there were no such schools in Georgia at that time, or at least very few.

Mr. Thompson has, in numerous ways, showed the vet which side of the fence he is on concerning veterans' affairs.... Let's think things over good, boys, and vote for a friend and companion.³

The theme School conditions under Thompson will improve grouped articles discussing the educational issues presented by Thompson. Articles in this group praised Thompson for his specific plan for financing better schools. Examples from

¹Atlanta Constitution, June 26, 1950, p. 14.

²Ibid., June 10, 1950, p. 10.

³Ibid., June 27, 1950, p. 16.

articles supporting this theme were:

Former Governor Thompson said, "We will activate and finance the MFPE as of January 1, 1951.... We will provide genuine and honest tax revision. This includes repeal of the state property tax, of the 198 miscellaneous nuisance taxes and the sales tax on cigarettes and gasoline enacted in 1949. We will pass a simple sales tax to make up for these tax losses and provide the additional funds required...."¹

Those who believe in better schools for Georgia children have an important choice to make Wednesday. We urge them to vote for M. E. Thompson.²

Category C. Public Reaction to Candidates

The theme The Georgia Press is against Talmadge and his policies covered articles commenting on the attitude of the press toward Talmadge. Examples of some of these articles follow:

For 15 years-since the violence and civic debauchery at the Capitol in the mid-'30s-The Atlanta Journal has opposed Talmadge-ism. For 10 years-since the violence and civic debauchery at the Capitol in 1939-40-The Atlanta Journal has opposed Rivers-ism.... For 12 of the 18 years, one or the other of two ruthless and rapacious political machines has run the State government and made it a feeding ground for their bosses, heelers and patrons.... The people of Georgia have the opportunity on Wednesday to wreck Talmadge-ism and send it to the scrap-heap to join Rivers-ism.³

...the zestful editor of the Dawson County Advertiser, wonders editorially "where Ed and Ellis are during this hot gubernatorial campaign."

The answer, dear lady, is: Ellis is in Europe attending to his personal business and Ed was in Columbus with Herman the other night and announcing him as "Georgia's next governor."⁴

¹Atlanta Journal, June 5, 1950, p. 18.

²Ibid., June 26, 1950, p. 20.

³Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution, June 25, 1950, p. 2F.

⁴Atlanta Journal, June 3, 1950, p. 2.

A comment from one paper stated:

A reader reminded us this week that not once had one of our comments appeared in the Atlanta Journal's "Cider from the Georgia Press" since we came out for Talmadge....¹

Another added:

Many of the "white collar" crowd have joined their political wagon to that of the "wool hat" boys.
This morning a headline greeted us in this fashion:
"80 per cent of the state press for Talmadge...."²

In a speech before the Georgia Exchange Clubs at Albany, Attorney General Eugene Cook said last week he could not understand "the attitude of those who insist that the recent Supreme Court decisions on segregation, the county-unit system, the tidelands case and the status of FEPC are not issues in the current gubernatorial campaign."

Mr. Cook's speech was clearly intended to favor the candidacy of Governor Herman Talmadge over that of M. E. Thompson....³

Thompson's platform is winning new supporters was the theme expressing the reaction of individuals, organizations and the press toward Thompson as a gubernatorial candidate.

A few examples supporting this theme are:

In the final months of his administration he came under the influence of former Gov. E. D. Rivers and others he thought could help him be re-elected.... He allowed evil practices to creep into certain departments of the state government.

It was these facts which kept The Journal from supporting Mr. Thompson two years ago....

This year Mr. Thompson is man enough to admit publicly his past mistakes...and to chart his own course without apology or obeisance to anyone....

On the basis of the campaign and the record, The Journal therefore endorses the candidacy of M. E. Thompson for governor and urges his election by the people of Georgia.⁴

¹Ibid., June 26, 1950, p. 20.

²Atlanta Constitution, June 16, 1950, p. 22.

³Atlanta Journal, June 21, 1950, p. 18.

⁴Ibid., May 28, 1950, p. 16 B.

1. If you want the Minimum Foundation Plan for Education financed-vote for Thompson.

2. If you want the state ad valorem tax abolished and left for city and county use....

4. If you want a man and not a machine, as head of our state-vote for Thompson.... There are others in the race, but only Thompson has a chance to unseat the machine....¹

We want you to know how grateful Floyd countians are for the stand your good paper has taken for M. E. Thompson. We believe in him and feel the most important thing for Georgians to do is join in the crusade for better government....²

Category D. Appeal for Support

The category Appeals for Support grouped the following themes, Vote for Talmadge, Vote for Thompson. Some of the articles appealing for votes for Talmadge read:

Now is the time for all good Talmadgites to get their automobiles ready, tires tested, 'n' everything so as to make a safe and speedy trip to vote for Herman Talmadge on June 28.³

We happen to know the low-down in the Governor's race. Talmadge doesn't need any coaching. His followers will stick to him and give him a big victory on June 28.⁴

The following are excerpts from some of the articles appealing for votes for Thompson:

The Enquirer believes that the people of Georgia will have good government if M. E. Thompson is elected as Governor.⁵

Thompson is running a "poor man's race" for governor. If he is elected, he will not owe any allegiance to

¹Ibid., June 21, 1950, p. 19.

²Ibid., June 8, 1950, p. 36.

³Atlanta Constitution, June 26, 1950, p. 16.

⁴Ibid., June 23, 1950, p. 20.

⁵Ibid., June 26, 1950, p. 13.

special interests, nor any obligation to any one except the people....¹

Tell folks to wake up now and vote. If the Talmadge gang takes over Georgia it's goodbye to Georgia. It won't be worth a last year's bird nest. Elect Thompson. He is honest and capable.²

Category E. Past Record of Candidates

Talmadge's record and success show him to be the sort of person whom most Georgians would like to see become governor covered articles that dealt with the administrative achievements of Talmadge. Examples of comments sent in by writers supporting the theme as stated were:

There is good reason for the endorsement of Talmadge at the polls. On the two greatest issues before the people, the County Unit System and FEPC, the position of Talmadge is the correct one, namely, he is irrevocably for the County Unit and against FEPC....³

Governor Herman Talmadge has fulfilled his promises as to the old age pensions, highways, hospitals, and paved roads.... Vote for Herman Talmadge to thank him for the things he's done. He is just like his father, Gene Talmadge, a good Governor. Go to the polls and give him four more years in which to improve Georgia.⁴

¹Atlanta Journal, June 5, 1950, p. 19.

²Atlanta Constitution, June 27, 1950, p. 16.

³Ibid., June 26, 1950, p. 13.

⁴Ibid., June 27, 1950, p. 16.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

• Each theme was counted as favorable or unfavorable and a comparison was made between the way citizens voted and the attitudes expressed in the newspapers. The themes were coded by the use of a plus sign if the articles were favorable to the theme as stated and a minus sign if the statements were unfavorable to the theme as stated. The themes were grouped under Editorials, Columnists, Georgia Press, and Letters to Editor, according to the section in which the article appeared on the editorial page. Table 1 indicates the number of times a theme occurred and how this theme was treated.

Articles by Columnists and Editorials

There were twenty articles all favorable to theme A1, Thompson is a courageous, honest statesman and if elected will install an effective economic administration. In the Journal four of these articles appeared in the editorial column, three in letters written to the editor and three in the "Cider from the Georgia Press." The Constitution contained four letters to the editor, five letters from the press and one article written by a columnist.

Theme A2, Talmadge and his followers are dishonest, appeared twice in the Constitution; once in a letter to the

TABLE 1

FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF THEMES

| Themes | Constitution | | | | | | | | Journal | | | | | | | | Atlanta Constitution-Journal (Jun. Ed.) | | | | | | | | Total |
|--------|--------------|---|-----------|---|---------------|---|---------|---|-----------|---|-----------|---|---------------|---|---------|---|---|---|-----------|---|---------------|---|---------|---|-------|
| | Editorial | | Columnist | | Georgia Press | | Letters | | Editorial | | Columnist | | Georgia Press | | Letters | | Editorial | | Columnist | | Georgia Press | | Letters | | |
| | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | |
| A1... | | | 1 | | 5 | | 4 | | 4 | | | | 3 | | 3 | | | | | | | | | | 20 |
| A2... | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| A3... | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| B1... | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| B2... | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 2 |
| B4... | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 1 |
| B5... | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| B6... | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| B7... | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| B8... | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | 4 |
| B9... | | | | | | | 2 | | 3 | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 7 |
| B10.. | | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| C1... | | | 1 | | | | | | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3 |
| C2... | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | 4 |
| C3... | | | 3 | | | | 1 | | | | | | 1 | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 5 |
| D1... | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | 2 |
| D2... | | | | | | | 1 | | 1 | | | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | 4 |
| E1... | | | | 2 | 1 | | 3 | 1 | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | 9 |
| Total | | | 7 | 2 | 7 | | 19 | 2 | 10 | | | | 9 | 1 | 12 | 2 | 1 | 1 | | | | | 2 | | 75 |

editor and once in an article by a columnist. In the Journal this theme appeared in a letter to the editor. All articles were in agreement with the theme as stated.

In the Journal theme B1, Conditions among veterans will be better under Talmadge, occurred twice; once in "Pulse of the Press" and once in "Pulse of the Public"; both articles disagreed with the theme as stated.

In two of the Journal's editorials theme B10, School conditions under Thompson will improve, was recorded as favorable. This theme appeared once in an article in the Constitution by a columnist whose attitude was favorable.

Four articles were coded plus under theme C1, The Georgia Press is against Talmadge and his policies. In the Constitution one article was written by a columnist and in the Journal three articles were written in the column "Cider from the Georgia Press."

Theme D2, Vote for Thompson, was coded favorable in four instances. In the Constitution one article appeared in the "Pulse of the Public," and in the Journal this theme was carried in one editorial article and one article to the editor of the paper. In the Atlanta Journal and Constitution's editorial column, theme D2 appeared once.

Theme E1, Talmadge's record and success show him to be the sort of person whom most Georgians would like to see elected Governor, appeared in eight articles; five of the articles agreed with the theme. These articles were found in three letters to the editor of the Constitution, one in the

"Pulse of the Press" column of the Constitution and once in the Atlanta Journal column, "Cider from the Georgia Press." The three unfavorable articles appeared in the Constitution; two were written by a columnist and one appeared in the column, "Pulse of the Public."

Letters to the Editor

Of the seventy-five articles read, the major portion of themes occurred in letters to the editor. There is the likelihood that many people, having read the editorial comments, wrote letters expressing their reactions to the papers' point of view. Consequently, these letters probably reflect the influence of the papers.

The nine themes appearing in this column were: Theme B3, Talmadge does not favor a modern integrated system of public welfare for the state, which appeared once in a letter written to the editor of the Journal and was coded plus.

Theme A3, Talmadge and his followers are law-violators, was coded minus in the Constitution's "Pulse of the Public" and plus in the Journal's column, "Letters to the Editor."

Theme B2, Talmadge is not in sympathy with the working people and does not have their support, was coded twice as favorable; once in "Pulse of the Public" of the Constitution and once in a letter written to the editor of the Atlanta Journal and Constitution.

Theme B4, Talmadge not due credit for non-FEPC legislation, appeared once in "Letters to the Editor" of the Atlanta

Journal and Constitution and was coded plus.

Theme B5, The County Unit System is not democratic and retards the progress of the State, was coded as favorable twice; once in the "Letters to the Editor."

Theme B6, Talmadge, if elected, will preserve Southern ideals and traditions, occurred in an article in the Constitution's column, "Pulse of the Public" and in a letter to the editor of the Journal. Both articles were favorable to the theme as stated.

Theme B7, Talmadge evades the question of how to finance better schools in Georgia, was coded as favorable four times. In the Constitution the theme appeared in "Pulse of the Public" and in "Pulse of the Press." In the Journal the theme appeared twice in the column "Letters to the Editor."

Theme D1, Vote for Talmadge, was coded minus in the column, "Letters to the Editor" of the Journal. In the Constitution it appeared once as favorable in the "Pulse of the Public" column.

Georgia Press

During the period of the analysis the Constitution and the Journal printed excerpts from eleven Georgia newspapers. These included the Banks County Journal, Abbeville Chronicle, Blue Ridge Post, Brantley Enterprise, Columbus Enquirer, Dawson County Advertiser, Macon News, Monticello News, Omega News, Waycross Journal and Winder News. It is significant to note that in the eleven counties Thompson had the support of the press and received the majority of unit and popular votes

from them. Table 2 gives the county, the population, the newspaper and the circulation statistics for each of the quoted newspapers. The map on page 35 shows the location of the counties. It is important to note that the Constitution and Journal carried no press comments from newspapers located in the northeast and southeast sections of Georgia, the two sections where Talmadge received the majority of votes.

TABLE 2

COUNTY NEWSPAPERS QUOTED IN THE
CONSTITUTION AND JOURNAL

| County | Population | Newspaper | Circulation |
|----------|------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Banks | 8,733 | Banks County Jo. | * |
| Barrow | 13,064 | Winder News | 2,250 |
| Bibb | 83,783 | Macon News | 33,499 |
| Brantley | 6,871 | Brantley Enterprise | 1,700 |
| Dawson | 4,479 | Dawson County | 1,000 |
| Fannin | 14,752 | Blue Ridge Post | 845 |
| Jasper | 8,772 | Monticello News | 17,151 |
| Muscogee | 75,494 | Columbus Enquirer | 500 |
| Tift | 18,599 | Omega News | 7,821 |
| Ware | 27,929 | Waycross Journal | 7,821 |
| Wilcox | 12,755 | Abbeville Chronicle | 900 |

*Circulation not available at time of study

Table 3 shows the number of articles that appeared in the editorials, the letters, the Georgia Press and the columnists' articles and reveals that the favorable editorials were overwhelmingly for Thompson. There were four times as many articles favorable to Thompson as to Talmadge. No unfavorable comments concerning Thompson appeared in the editorial quotations from the Georgia press or the columnists' columns. Of

the thirty-seven letters to the editor Thompson received five times as many favorable as unfavorable letters. There is a direct reverse in the number of articles favorable and unfavorable for Thompson as compared with the number of articles favorable and unfavorable to Talmadge. Talmadge received four times as many unfavorable as favorable letters.

TABLE 3

SUMMARY TABLE OF ARTICLES FAVORABLE AND
UNFAVORABLE FOR CANDIDATES

| | Editorial | Letters | Georgia Press | Columnists | Total | |
|-------------|-----------|---------|------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| | | | | | Num- ber | Per Cent |
| Favorable | | | | | | |
| Talmadge | 0 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 9 |
| Thompson | 8 | 10 | 9 | 5 | 32 | 43 |
| Unfavorable | | | | | | |
| Talmadge | 4 | 20 | 6 | 4 | 34 | 45 |
| Thompson | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Total | 12 | 37 | 17 | 9 | 75 | 100 |

Comparison of Press Attitudes and Voting Behavior

In Georgia the Governor is not elected by popular votes but by the County Unit System. A total of 206 unit votes is necessary to win a gubernatorial election in Georgia. Returns from the 159 counties in Georgia gave Talmadge, the victor, 241,244 popular votes; the loser, Thompson, received a total of 237,414. Talmadge led in 122 counties with 303 county unit votes. Thompson received a total of 166 unit votes from 36 counties.

Table 5 shows that the percentage of popular votes was practically divided between the two candidates but the County

TABLE 4

SUMMARY TABLE OF VOTES FOR THE CANDIDATES

| Candidate | Popular Vote | | Unit Vote | |
|-----------|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Talmadge | 241,244 | 50.4 | 303 | 72 |
| Thompson | 237,414 | 49.6 | 116 | 28 |

Unit System made it possible for Talmadge to have an advantage of almost three times as many votes as Thompson.

TABLE 5

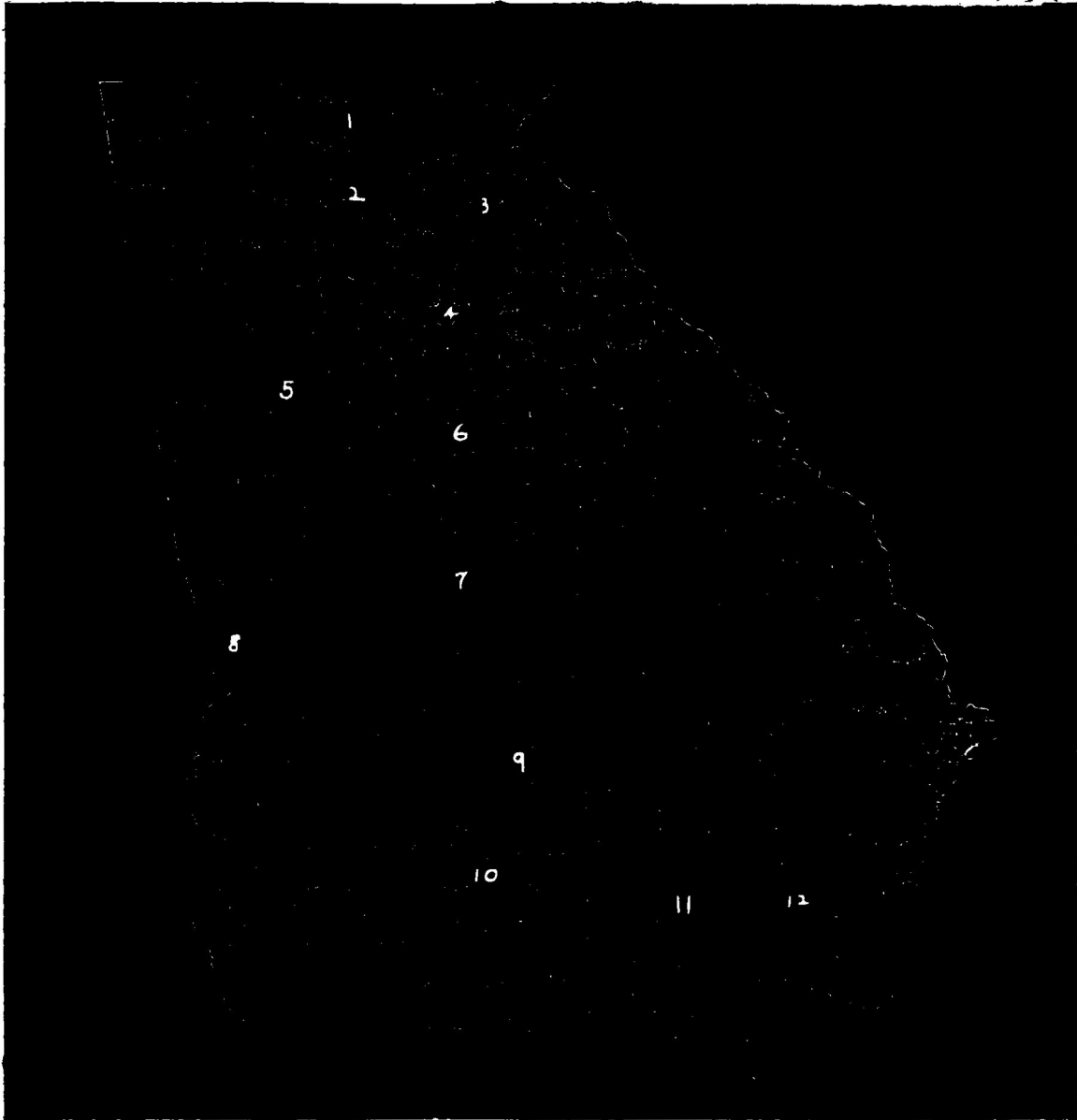
DISTRIBUTION OF POPULAR AND UNIT VOTES
FOR THE CANDIDATES

| County | Talmadge | | Thompson | | Press Attitude | |
|----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|----------|
| | Unit Vote | Popular Vote | Unit Vote | Popular Vote | Talmadge | Thompson |
| Banks | 2 | 554 | | 283 | - | |
| Barrow | 2 | 230 | | 183 | | + |
| Bibb | | 6,219 | 6 | 9,633 | | + |
| Brantley | 2 | 31 | | 24 | | + |
| Dawson | 4 | 430 | | 305 | - | |
| Fannin | 2 | 146 | | 96 | | + |
| Fulton | | 22,346 | 6 | 43,440 | | + |
| Jasper | | 745 | | 677 | | + |
| Muscogee | | 4,529 | 6 | 4,850 | | + |
| Tift | 2 | 2,041 | | 1,881 | - | |
| Ware | | 1,663 | 4 | 2,110 | - | |
| Wilcox | 2 | 1,093 | | 767 | - | |
| Total | 18 | 40,017 | 22 | 64,256 | | |

Of the twelve counties that expressed attitudes in their newspapers concerning the gubernatorial campaign, Thompson had the support of their press and received the majority of unit and popular votes from them. Thompson received 22 unit votes to Talmadge's 18; popular votes totalling 64,256 were registered for Thompson, whereas Talmadge received only

40,017 popular votes. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that there was a correlation between the attitudes expressed in the newspapers with the voting behavior of the citizens.

MAP 1

COUNTIES ISSUING NEWSPAPERS COMMENTING ON
GUBERNATORIAL CAMPAIGN

1. Fannin
2. Dawson
3. Banks
4. Barrow
5. Fulton
6. Jasper

7. Bibb
8. Muscogee
9. Wilcox
10. Tift
11. Ware
12. Brantley

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The foregoing study was concerned with the relationship between the attitudes expressed in the Georgia press and the way citizens voted in the 1950 primary election in Georgia. With respect to the actual votes cast, detailed study reveals a direct relationship between the attitudes of the press and the way citizens voted.

The following conclusions are drawn directly from the interpretation of the data collected in the study: of the seventy-five articles analyzed, nine per cent expressed attitudes favorable to Talmadge whereas, forty-three per cent expressed attitudes favorable to Thompson. Forty-five per cent of the articles opposed Talmadge and three per cent were unfavorable to Thompson. Thompson carried the support of both the voters and the press in the eleven counties quoted in the Atlanta Constitution and the Atlanta Journal during this period of study. Thompson, therefore, carried the support of both the voters and the press in twelve counties (Fulton included). It should be emphasized that the Constitution and Journal carried no press comments from newspapers located in the northeast and southeast sections of Georgia, the two sections where Talmadge received the majority of votes. This writer must

wonder, then, what the results of the gubernatorial campaign of 1950 would have been had the press of other counties been more active in making known their editorial policy.

This data, then, suggests that editorial policy and the interchange of opinion in letters from voters are influential forces in political activity.

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